



State Senator

January 16, 2004

VALDE GARCIA

*Serving the 22<sup>nd</sup> District*

*Shiawassee-Livingston-southern Ingham counties*

## Coffee Break News

### **People's Override initiative launched at the state capitol**

Members of the Michigan Senate joined leadership from Right to Life of Michigan, the Michigan Catholic Conference, and other organizations today to kick off the "People's Override," a citizens' petition drive to enact the Legal Birth Definition Act. Supporters of the initiative must gather 254,206 signatures of registered voters to put the issue before the legislature. Then a simple majority vote in both chambers will put the law into effect. The Legal Birth Definition Act defines legal birth at the point when any non-severed portion of the child emerges from the mother.

### **Meth penalties package signed into law**

People participating in the production of methamphetamine by owning or possessing the places, chemicals or equipment used in production of the illegal stimulant will face tougher fines and penalties now that the bills have been signed into law. Public Acts 307-313 provide law enforcement officials and courts with necessary tools to convict offenders who endanger public lives by making meth. The new penalties increase to 20 years imprisonment the maximum penalty for owning or possessing the places, chemicals or equipment used in the production of meth and creates a maximum penalty of four years imprisonment for people who transport anhydrous ammonia (an ingredient) in unapproved containers.

### **Republican venture-capital plan approved**

The governor last week signed a major piece of the Republican JOBS agenda into law, approving tax credits and incentives to encourage business investment in Michigan. The package approved includes Single Business Tax credits to make Michigan more attractive to business investment and economic development. Another piece of legislation also signed into law establishes the Michigan Early Stage Venture Capital Investment Fund, which provides tax credits for fund investors. SBT credits would be limited to \$30 million per year and \$150 million in total, beginning in tax years after 2008. Michigan ranks 34th nationally in venture capital investment and the majority of high-tech industrial states ranking well above Michigan. Most Great Lakes states outrank Michigan as well, including Minnesota (16th), Pennsylvania (17th), Illinois (18th), Ohio (31st) and Wisconsin (32nd). The public acts are part of the House and Senate Republicans' initiative to increase job opportunities and revitalize Michigan's economy.

### **Legislature fights invasive species**

Owning certain exotic species of fish, such as silver and bighead carp, is now considered a felony under legislation approved by the governor last week. The approved package also prohibits releasing non-native fish in Michigan waters and addresses aquatic nuisances, such as genetically engineered and foreign fish species. Non-native fish carry exotic diseases and parasites and pose a major threat to the health of the Great Lakes basin and its natural habitat. Efforts to raise public awareness concerning aquatics nuisances has increased as an estimated 140 exotic species have made their way into the Great Lakes through the downstream flow of water caused by commercial and recreational boat traffic.

In order to raise funds to research and eradicate invasive aquatic species, a voluntary watercraft decal will soon be available for sale for all boaters. The decal costs \$35, with \$25 going to a new Great Lakes Protection Fund.

### **Boating hit-and-run now a felony**

Legislation toughening the punishment for the operator of a boat involved in a hit-and-run accident resulting in death or a crippling injury was recently signed into law by the governor. This change, from a misdemeanor to a felony, makes the penalty for this crime the same as that for causing a hit-and-run accident in an automobile. Under the new law, someone guilty of failure to stop at the scene of a marine accident causing death will be guilty of a felony punishable by up to 15 years in prison and up to \$10,000 in fines. Someone guilty of failure to stop at the scene of a marine accident causing serious impairment will be guilty of a felony punishable by up to five years in prison and up to \$5,000 in fines. Senate Bills 658 and 659 have been assigned Public Act numbers 231 and 232 of 2003.

### **Consolidated elections**

Under legislation recently passed and signed into law, election dates in Michigan will be consolidated to four specific dates each year. This legislation will allow citizens to always be aware of voting dates and will save taxpayers money. The four dates will take place on specified Tuesdays in February, May, August, and November. A fifth "floater" date is possible for school districts to hold an election for a millage or bond issue if enough petition signatures are obtained. However, the election must still be held on a Tuesday and may not be held 30 days before or 35 days after one of the four dates above.